



Focus on **Recycling Facts & Myths**

from Ecology's Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program, Statewide Resources Section

Facts

Glass

- ➊ Glass never wears out -- it can be recycled forever.
- ➋ We save more than a ton of resources for every ton of glass recycled -- 1,330 pounds of sand, 433 pounds of soda ash, 433 pounds of limestone and 151 pounds of feldspar.
- ➌ Most bottles and jars contain at least 25 percent recycled glass.
- ➍ Recycling one glass bottle saves enough electricity to light a 100-watt bulb for four hours.

Metals

- ➊ In 2003, Washington residents recycled 17,608 tons of aluminum cans.
- ➋ Aluminum-can recycling saves 95 percent of the energy needed to make aluminum from bauxite ore.
- ➌ Americans throw away enough steel every year to build all the new cars made in the United States.
- ➍ Tin cans are actually 99 percent steel, with a thin layer of tin added to prevent rusting.

Paper

- ➊ Citizens in Washington state recycled nearly 3 million tons of materials in 2003. Almost 31 percent of that total was paper.
- ➋ Seventy-five percent of a tree harvested for paper does not wind up as paper product.
- ➌ One ton of paper requires the use of 98 tons of various resources.
- ➍ Paper made from recycled paper instead of virgin fiber requires 70 percent less energy.
- ➎ At 40 percent, paper makes up the largest part of our trash.

Plastic

- ➊ Americans use 4 million plastic bottles every hour, yet only one bottle out of four is recycled!
- ➋ In 1977, polyethylene terephthalate soda bottles were introduced to the market.
- ➌ In 2002, there were 18 billion single-serving plastic beverage bottles on store shelves.



Recycling
Symbol

Misc.

- Every year we dispose of 24 million tons of leaves and grass clippings, which could be composted to conserve landfill space.
- Single-use bags waste trees (paper) or fossil fuels (plastic). They contribute to water pollution during production and landfill overload at disposal. Re-usable cloth or paper bags reduce these problems.
- Recycling is a continuous loop that works only if the collected materials are turned into products, purchased and used again. Buying products made from recycled materials supports the markets for these products and keeps the cycle going.
- Around 200 B.C., the Chinese used old fishing nets to make the world's very first piece of recycled paper.
- Gary Dean Anderson designed the recycling symbol in 1970.
- The first municipal dump was established in 400 B.C. in Athens.

Myths

Myth: We can recycle only 25 to 30 percent of our solid wastes.

Fact: Twenty-five percent was considered a maximum level in 1985. Today, it should be considered a minimum, not a maximum. Washington state already exceeded 38 percent in 2003.

Myth: Landfills and incinerators are more cost-effective and environmentally sound than recycling options.

Fact: Recycling programs, when designed properly, are cost-competitive with landfills and incinerators, and provide pollution-prevention benefits. Recycling materials not only avoids the pollution that would be generated through landfilling and incineration, but also reduces the environmental burden of virgin-material extraction and the manufacturing process.

Myth: Landfills are significant job generators for rural communities.

Fact: Recycling, where instituted, creates many more jobs for rural and urban communities than landfill and incineration disposal options.

For more information

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